

# **Southern Nevada District Office**

## **District Manager's Report**

**May 2016**

**Red Rock Canyon Fee Free February 13-15:** In conjunction with other Department of Interior agencies, Red Rock Canyon National Conservation Area waived amenity-related fees for President's Day weekend, February 13-15.

### **BLM Initiates Segregation near Searchlight to Facilitate Additional Analysis of Searchlight**

**Wind Project:** The Bureau of Land Management announced a segregation of lands near Searchlight to allow the agency to complete a Supplemental Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) for a proposed wind energy facility in response to a recent Federal Court decision. While valid existing rights remain in effect, no new mining claims can be filed for the area during the environmental analysis period. On Oct. 30, 2015, a Federal judge vacated the BLM's record of decision, Final Environmental Impact Statement and Biological Opinion supporting the right-of-way grant for the Searchlight Wind Project, citing insufficient protections for species such as the desert tortoise and bald eagle. In order to remedy the deficiencies identified by the court, the BLM will undertake a Supplemental FEIS. The purpose of the two-year segregation is to facilitate efficient processing of the Supplemental FEIS and avoid conflicts between renewable energy generation and new mining claims. The lands remain open to discretionary actions, such as rights-of-way and land use permits and to the mineral leasing laws. The notice segregates the Searchlight Wind project area of nearly 18,790 acres of Federal land from appropriation pursuant to the public land laws, including location pursuant to the General Mining Law of 1872, subject to valid existing rights. This segregation does not apply to oil and gas leases under the Mineral Leasing Act of 1920 or sales of materials such as sand and gravel under the Mineral Materials Act of 1947. The segregation is necessary to prevent the filing of mining claims in the project area, which would hinder the development of the project and increase costs of the project. This temporary segregation does not affect valid existing rights in mining claims located before this segregation notice. Licenses, permits, cooperative agreements, or discretionary land use authorizations of a temporary nature, which would not impact lands identified in this notice, may be allowed with the approval of an authorized officer of the BLM during the period of segregation.

### **Construction Completed on Red Rock Canyon Scenic Drive and Parking Lot**

**Improvements:** The first phase of transportation improvements at Red Rock Canyon National Conservation Area Construction is completed. Traffic has been rerouted and now crosses new low water bridge crossings at the Sandstone and Red Rock washes. The new bridges replaced the existing at-grade road alignments on the 13-mile Scenic Drive and will greatly improve visitor safety during flash floods in both areas as well as improve traffic flow by reducing the frequency of closing the scenic drive during rain or storm events. The first phase of improvements also included paving and other improvements to the parking lots at the visitor center. Work on the first phase began in January 2015 and was funded by Federal Highway Administration and the Southern Nevada Public Land Management Act. Public meetings were held in 2014 and the project received wide-spread support. The potential improvements for phase two include rehabilitating the pavement along the 13-Mile Scenic Drive and improving parking at the following parking lots: Calico 1, Calico 2, Sandstone Quarry, White Rock, Willow

Springs, Ice Box Canyon, Red Rock Wash, and Pine Creek Canyon; improving a section of the road from the visitor center to Sandstone Quarry to two-way traffic; and constructing a one-way return route from Sandstone Quarry to the visitor center. The proposed improvements will be prioritized based on input from the public as well as available funding. A public meeting will be held later this spring/summer to provide additional information.

**BLM Seeks Public Comment for Transfer of Interest from the City of Las Vegas to Opportunity Village:** The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Las Vegas Field Office sought public comment on a proposal for a transfer of interest from the City of Las Vegas to the Opportunity Village and a change of use from a park site to a park, unemployment resource center, and an arts enrichment center with appurtenances for children and adults with intellectual disabilities. These facilities includes a storage building, loading dock, refuse enclosure, parking lot, landscaping, lighting, walkways, drainage, irrigation, utilities and ancillary improvements. The change in use would affect 16.61 acres of public land (N-93838-01) near Rome and Thom Boulevard.

**Southern Nevada Public Land Management Act Round 16 Nominations:** The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) opened the nomination period for Round 16 project proposals funded under the Southern Nevada Public Land Management Act (SNPLMA). The nomination period opened on March 1 and closed April 29. Local governmental entities may seek SNPLMA funds for parks, trails, and natural areas in portions of Carson City and Clark, Lincoln, and White Pine counties. Federal agencies may seek funds for capital improvements, conservation initiatives, and restoration projects in eastern Nevada. Federal, State, and other agencies may seek SNPLMA funds for hazardous fuels reduction in the Lake Tahoe Basin, the Carson Range, and the Spring Mountain Range. Federal agencies may seek funding for acquisition of environmentally sensitive land statewide.

**BLM Hosted Meetings on Vegetation Restoration and Monitoring of Wildland Fire Burn Sites in Red Rock Canyon:** The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Red Rock/Sloan Field is sought input in early April regarding issues related to revegetating, recovering and reducing future fire risk for two wildland fire sites within Red Rock Canyon National Conservation Area. The BLM is in the process of preparing an Environmental Assessment regarding proposed follow-up treatments of Loop and Scenic Fires – which burned 2,566 acres of desert tortoise habitat within the 13-Mile Scenic Drive in 2005. Previous treatments in response to this fire included fencing and herbicide application to reduce the dominate presence of red brome. Unfortunately, the native vegetation has not recovered as anticipated so the proposed follow-up treatments were designed. Project goals include configuring and installing fuel breaks using imazapic-containing herbicide to reduce brome grasses, applying locally-adapted seeds of early-colonizing species to rapidly establish native cover for use by tortoise, creating habitat islands to promote the establishment of long-lived native shrubs important for tortoise habitat and monitoring effectiveness of the treatments using a scientifically robust sampling strategy.

**Red Rock Canyon National Conservation Area with the Subaru/Leave No Trace Traveling Trainers Host Special Events to Help Citizens Learn How Preserve and Protect Treasured Areas for Generations to Come:** The Leave No Trace Center for Outdoor Ethics and its Subaru/Leave No Trace Traveling Trainers team partnered with Red Rock Canyon National

Conservation Area to host community events and educational activities March 28-April 2. The scenic and popular Red Rock Canyon has experienced an increase in desert dumping, graffiti and user created trails over the recent years. The Hot Spot Program, a key component of the Leave No Trace In Every Park initiative, raises community awareness and brings solutions and prevention measures to popular natural areas around the country facing heavy recreational use and consequently, the misuse of trails, parks and open space areas. The Subaru/Leave No Trace Traveling Trainers travel throughout the country providing public education about how to reduce impacts in the outdoors and improve the trail user experience

**BLM Seeks Public Comment to Lease Land to Clark County School District for an Elementary School:** The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Las Vegas Field Office announced it is seeking public comment on a proposal to lease and/or subsequently convey approximately 12.5 acres of public land to Clark County School District for an elementary school to be located at the northwest corner of West Torino Avenue and South Juliano Road in Las Vegas, Clark County, Nevada. The elementary school will consist of one and/or two story building classrooms, sports field(s), playgrounds, parking lot, and related ancillary structures. Public comments will be accepted for 45 days until May 23, 2016.

**Red Rock Canyon Unveils Limited Edition Vintage-Style Poster:** BLM National Landscape Conservation System and Community Partnership Acting Assistant Director Abbie Jossie unveiled a limited edition commemorative vintage-style poster depicting Red Rock Canyon National Conservation Area. Posters were available at the visitor center and were distributed on a first come, first served basis. In FY 2015, 2.4 million people visited this stunning Nevada landscape to enjoy the 13-mile scenic drive; miles of trails; excellent rock climbing, biking, and equestrian opportunities; and LEED gold-certified visitor center. Congress designated Red Rock Canyon National Conservation Area in 1990 as Nevada's first National Conservation Area (the seventh to be designated nationally). Today, the area is part of the Bureau of Land Management's National Landscape Conservation System (also known as National Conservation Lands). The National Conservation Lands encompass more than 30 million acres of specially designated places under the stewardship of the Bureau of Land Management (BLM). More than 875 areas, including national monuments, national conservation areas, wilderness areas, wilderness study areas, wild and scenic rivers, and national scenic and historic trails make up this collection of notable places. They are an important part of the 245 million acres of public lands and 700 million acres of subsurface mineral estate that the BLM manages for multiple uses and a sustained yield of resources, such as energy, minerals, forage, timber, and recreation. In the BLM Southern Nevada District, National Conservation Lands include Red Rock Canyon National Conservation Area, Sloan Canyon National Conservation Area, Old Spanish Trail, 15 designated wilderness areas and four wilderness study area. On Earth Day 2014, the Bureau of Land Management introduced three vintage posters depicting some of the spectacular landscapes of the National Conservation Lands. The poster series aims to raise awareness and encourage greater stewardship of National Conservation Lands.

**BLM Seeks Public Comment to Lease Land Clark County for Park:** The Bureau of Land Management Las Vegas Field Office announced it is seeking public comment on a proposal to lease approximately 15 acres of public land to Clark County for a public park and related facilities. The park is proposed near the intersection of Wigwam Avenue and Torrey Pines Drive

in the southwest area of the Las Vegas Valley, and would include covered play structures, restrooms, parking, picnic pavilions, open turf areas, walking path, basketball courts, landscaping, lighting signage, and other ancillary amenities.

**BLM Seeks Public Comment to Lease Land to Clark County for Ford / Grand Canyon**

**Park:** The Bureau of Land Management Las Vegas Field Office announced it is seeking public comment on a proposal to lease approximately 17.5 acres of public land to Clark County for a public park and related facilities. The park is proposed near the vicinity of Wigwam Road and Grand Canyon Drive in the southwest area of the Las Vegas Valley, and would include a children's playground area, perimeter walking path, picnic areas, restroom facilities, athletic facilities, parking lot, landscaping, lighting, utilities, and ancillary equipment.

**Land Sale Generates More Than \$94.5 Million for Projects:** The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) today sold 818.66 acres in 34 parcels for \$94,536,000 during a competitive public land sale. The agency offered 846.16 acres, in 39 parcels, under the Southern Nevada Public Land Management Act (SNPLMA). Parcels offered for sale varied in size from 1.25 to 247.6 acres and were located in the Las Vegas Valley.

**Hyperloop:** The Hyperloop Project is based on a newly emerging transportation technology that involves transporting people or cargo in levitated capsules through tubes at speeds up to 750 miles per hour. The company chose the Apex Industrial Area to build a testing facility on 50 acres. The proposed Hyperloop Project is located on both private and BLM corridors within Apex. Because of competition to patent this technology, Hyperloop sought fast-track approval for the construction of the facility. The BLM worked with Hyperloop, Governor's Office of Economic Development, City of North Las Vegas, and Clark County to permit a right-of-way on BLM managed land for Hyperloop within 60 days of receiving the completed application. The BLM issued the grant in late March and the Notice to Proceed in early May. Hyperloop will be breaking ground soon thereafter.

**Apex Industrial Area:** The Apex Industrial Area (Apex), located northeast of the City of Las Vegas, has become a focus of potential future development that could benefit the local and State economies. The BLM manages several important energy transmission corridors that traverse through the private lands in Apex. These energy transmission corridors are also important for connecting necessary access and utilities to support future development. For example, Faraday Futures, an automobile manufacturing company, is preparing to construct a facility on 900 acres of private lands within Apex. The BLM corridors will be key to connecting rail, road access, water, power, and natural gas to this facility. BLM is working with the City of North Las Vegas, the Governor's Office of Economic Development, and Clark County to ensure that the alignments for Faraday's utilities are compatible with future large-scale energy transmission development. The BLM, with the assistance of its partners, will develop a programmatic approach to approving future infrastructure needs on BLM-managed lands.